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# SERVICE

## USDA'S REPORT TO CONSUMERS

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE • OFFICE OF COMMUNICATION • WASHINGTON, D.C. 20250

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### LITTLE TOWN COMEBACK

It's A Switch. Rural and small town areas are staging a comeback. Instead of country folks swarming to the cities as they have for 50 years, people are beginning to head for the country. One reason is that people are apparently changing their minds about where they want to live. Another reason for the turnaround is more jobs are starting to open up in and around small towns. A reflection of this changing attitude about rural life and farming is the enrollment in colleges of agriculture at land-grant universities. Enrollment has more than doubled between 1963 and 1973. The movement of people from city to small towns is not, of course, all peaches and cream. Local leadership must have "look ahead" perspective and they must guard against city problems being brought to the country. Federal assistance for planning, financing and carrying out development of opportunities in small towns is available from a number of agencies, including the U.S. Department of Agriculture. According to USDA's Rural Development Service, the best places to inquire about the assistance are Local Extension Service, Farmers Home Administration, or other local USDA offices. There is at least one USDA office in almost every county in the U.S.

### IS THE WORLD FACING STARVATION?

Booklet Answers Questions. People on the Service mailing list recently were sent copies of a booklet entitled "Is The World Facing Starvation?". The booklet was prepared by USDA's Office of Communication to answer a number of questions about the world food situation and to help sort out the facts from the fiction about food supplies, hunger and famine. Additional copies of the booklet are available free from Special Reports Division, Room 459-A, Office of Communication, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. 20250.

### KNOW YOUR BUG

Good Guys And Bad Guys. If you don't know a flea beetle from a minute pirate bug, check into USDA's bulletin, "Insects and Diseases of Vegetables in the Home Garden". There's good reason to know the difference between the two insects: one will eat your tomatoes; one will eat the tomato eater. The book has line drawings, color photographs and descriptive text to help you identify the insect world's good guys and bad guys as well as some of the more common diseases that attack vegetables. Information on what to do about them is included. "Insects and Diseases of Vegetables in the Home Garden" (AIB-380) may be purchased for \$1.20 a copy from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402.





## SUMMER FOOD PREVIEW

What's in store at the foodstore this summer? Generally, food will average slightly higher in price than it did during the spring.

You can expect sharply higher beef prices to last through mid-summer. Last year's poor corn crop made it very expensive to feed cattle to Choice and Prime grades -- the grades most in demand by consumers. Many producers reduced substantially their number of cattle on feed while a good many producers sold corn instead of feeding it to their animals. Although more cattle were slaughtered this spring, their average weight was less; thus, less beef appeared in stores. Producers also are holding more animals on grass. But, grazing conditions usually deteriorate in late summer. Because of this, large numbers of grass-fed beef may hit the market late this summer reducing beef prices.

Pork products will cost more this summer than during the spring, chiefly because pork is in short supply. Again because of the reduced corn crop, hog producers sharply cut back output.

Because of the summertime popularity of poultry, prices usually rise. This year is no exception. Look for higher prices of both chicken and turkey until fall when broiler prices should decline substantially following the usual seasonal trend. Broiler output is running somewhat below last year; turkey production, well below. Because of financial losses over the past year and a half, poultry producers have reduced output. Turkey and broiler prices depend somewhat on red meat production: when more red meat goes to market, poultry prices generally go down.

Egg producers have been losing money and have cut back layer flock numbers, lowering egg production this year. Prices will be higher than in the spring and well above last summer's prices.

What about dairy products? Ice cream lovers are offered some hope -- prices stopped spiraling upward and should hold steady all summer. That is because sugar prices have been falling and cream prices have remained stable since January. Milk drinkers can expect to pay the same or a bit more for their beverage than they did in the spring. But compared with many other types of drinks, milk is an economical choice now. Although dairying remains a high-cost venture, milk production is holding its own and could increase later. That depends on several factors: crop conditions, and subsequent feed prices; milk prices; the slaughter cattle market; and other ventures open to dairy farmers. Look for higher cheese prices, particularly for specialty types like swiss. The reason is heavy demand. Also you'll pay slightly more for butter this summer.

The cost of oil used in margarine, especially soybean oil, has dropped by half since last October. Margarine prices have come down since January, but you may not see any further decline this summer.

Usually vegetables are least expensive and most abundant in late summer, but that's less likely this year. Higher production cost for vegetables could limit commercial output in 1975. Home gardens may influence retail prices of some vegetables; in the past, for example, they've affected tomato prices. So you could see lower prices in late summer for tomatoes and sweet corn. There will likely be fewer carrots and celery this summer, tending to keep prices high.

Low potato prices last winter led many growers to limit the acreage planted for spring and summer. The spring harvest fell 27 percent short of last spring's: growers not only planted fewer potatoes, but yields were down also. Thus, retail prices rose sharply in the spring and you can expect higher white potato prices until fall harvest.

Canned and frozen vegetable prices went up sharply last winter causing some consumers to shift to items like potatoes and dry beans. This left larger supplies of processed vegetables on hand, yet prices may not drop much because processing cost are expected to go up again this summer. It would take bumper crops to lower prices of canned and frozen vegetables.

There'll be plenty of nectarines, plums, cherries and apricots at about the same prices as a year ago. Melons are scarcer and more expensive than last year. Many melon growers have turned to other, more profitable crops with fewer labor problems. Watermelons, are the exception; spring plantings about equaled last year's. In areas where watermelons are grown, both growers and laborers have fewer alternatives. Labor is the biggest production cost to fruit growers. Expenses for packing, packaging, handling and transportation also add to the price you pay.

There will be plenty of canned peaches, cherries, pears, fruit cocktail, plums, applesauce and apple slices this summer -- roughly at spring's price levels. Cannerys have larger stocks of canned fruit because consumers reduced their purchases last winter and exports were down. Frozen fruit sections in your foodstores should have plenty of strawberries, raspberries, blackberries, and orange juice, though fewer blueberries. Frozen fruits should cost about what they did in the spring.

Average retail prices of bakery goods and cereals may decline slightly this summer. Last year, reduced grain crops; the after effects of price controls; and higher sugar prices led to a big price jump for these products. Recently, prices of important bakery ingredients -- sugar, flour, and shortening -- have dropped. But marketing and processing costs for bakery and cereal items keep rising.

#### FIRE RETARDANT RESEARCH REVISITED

Fabrics Flame; Batting Smoulders. For some time, it was assumed the treatments that made woven and knitted cotton fabrics fire resistant would do the same thing for cotton batting used in mattresses and upholstery. It didn't work that way. Research showed that the flame combustion process of fabrics was entirely different from smouldering combustion of batting. So scientist of the Agricultural Research Service developed a novel process that makes batting effectively smoulder resistant. The new treatment employs boric acid dissolved in methanol (methyl alcohol) as the smoulder-resistant agent. The solution is volatile and thus evaporates easily. When cotton fibers are introduced into such an atmosphere, the vapors quickly penetrate the fibers. The tiny amounts of moisture in the cotton causes the acid to reform inside the fibers where it is trapped to make the fibers smoulder resistant.



## OF INTEREST TO EDUCATORS

Publications With Educational Application. The U.S. Department of Agriculture has three new items that fit handily into the classroom. It will come as no surprise that all of the materials relate to agriculture and to some aspect of food. The materials are described below, along with information on ordering and on the age groups most likely.....

Good Food News For Kids. In this set of four leaflets, children will meet a quartet of farm animals bearing messages about food and nutrition. The leaflets, based on the four basic food groups, introduce Molly Moo (milk and dairy products); Gussie Goose (fruits and vegetables); Mary Mutton (meats and protein); and Fred the Horse (breads and cereals). They use puzzles, word games, artwork and text to explain how food is produced, why food costs what it costs, and how foods provide good nutrition. The four-page leaflets are designed primarily for children in the upper elementary age group. Sets of "Good Food News for Kids" are available free from Consumer Information, Pueblo, Colorado 81009, with a maximum of 25 sets per order.

Nutritional Labeling -- Tools For Its Use. This is the title of a booklet developed by USDA's Agricultural Research Service to help people unscramble all of that good nutrition information on food labels. The booklet explains some of the terms used on the nutrition information panels; shows amounts of nutrients recommended for people of various ages and sizes; and provides a seven-step procedure on using nutritional labeling to improve nutrition. A "go-along" with the booklet is the Nutrimeter, a counting device designed to help keep track of a day's calorie intake and percentages of the U.S. Recommended Daily Allowance (U.S. RDA) of nutrients. Also available are teacher's and student's guides for using the Nutrimeter. The materials, suitable for high school and adult classes, are for sale from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402. Cost are: "Nutritional Labeling--Tools For Its Use" (AIB-382), \$1.15 each; the Nutrimeter, 70 cents each; Teacher's Guide (MP-1304), 25 cents each; Student's Guide (MP-1303), 30 cents each.

From The Earth To Your Table. Who produces your food? Who shares in the money you spend for food? Why do food costs change? How do production costs effect the cost of food? These are some of the questions handled in a new activity book for high school teachers. Composed of eight preprinted spirit duplication masters, two transparencies and a teacher's guide, the activity book leads students to discover the basic elements of food production, food processing, and food distribution. The program presented is flexible enough to be used as an entire study unit or separated into parts for different courses, such as consumer economics, history, sociology, home economics and math. Copies of "From Earth To Your Table" were recently sent to almost every high school in the nation. If teachers do not have access to the book in their school, single free copies may be requested from: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Box 385, Vandalia, Ohio 45377.

SERVICE is a monthly newsletter of consumer interest. It is designed for those who report to the individual consumer rather than for mass distribution. For information about items in this issue, write: Lillie Vincent, Editor of Service, Office of Communication, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. 20250. Telephone (202) 447-5437.

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